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**FORCIBLE ENTRY CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS:  
EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF TACTICAL AEROSPACE  
POWER IN SUPPORT OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE  
COMMANDER**

by

Steven W. Gilland, MAJ, U.S. Army

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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Advisor: LTC Randall Soboul

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

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## **Preface**

I respectfully acknowledge the assistance and guidance of LTC Randy Soboul, who provided me a forum in which to research and account for a topic with which I am tactically proficient, but previously lacked operational expertise.

## **Abstract**

This research paper examines the effective employment of tactical airpower in support of forcible entry contingency operations. Forcible entry operations are critical to the United States military's success in future conflicts. Future threats will require the U.S. military to project power into isolated objective areas through the use of rapid deployment and the use of a tailored forcible entry force package. Many of our current OPLAN's require the seizure of an airfield or beachhead as an initial objective to serve as a lodgment area for follow on forces. The success of the small-scale contingency operation rests largely on the successful seizure of the lodgment.

The thesis analyzes three historical cases of forcible entry operations. Operation Urgent Fury (Grenada, 1983), Operation Just Cause (Panama, 1989), and Operation Restore Hope (Somalia, 1992) are examples of forcible entry contingency operations, which introduce combat power into an objective area through the successful seizure of a lodgment.

Through the review of current Army and Air Force doctrine the research paper identifies the expectations, limitations, and restrictions of each service in forcible entry operations. Also the review of Joint doctrine determines the resolution of any service doctrine conflicts. The thesis conducts historical research to determine if lessons learned were applied to future operations and proposed recommendations for future Forcible entry Contingency operations.

The research determines that the employment of tactical airpower in the execution of forcible entry contingency operations is relatively limited due to undefined boundaries and difficulties in command and control. The execution of forcible entry contingency is different from other types of operation due to limited planning time, ad hoc JTF staffs, mixed conventional and special operations, austere staging bases, limited intelligence, air superiority requirements, and aircraft vulnerability to name but a few. During Operations Urgent Fury and Just Cause, Air Force doctrine was relatively undefined and Joint doctrine closely resembled the Army's doctrine. The current joint doctrine resolves many of the issues in writing, yet the practical application of tactics, techniques, and procedures continue to have problems, even though our military possesses proficient personnel, the best equipment, and cutting edge technology.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*In the early morning hours of 20 December 1989, a Joint Task Force conducted a forcible entry operation in Panama. The operation was called Operation Just Cause. Pre-assault fires commenced with the employment of precision-guided munitions by two F-117 stealth aircraft at the Rio Hato airfield. AC-130 gunships provided additional tactical airpower targeting President Noriega's Comandancia, Paitilla airfield, Torrijos/Tocumen International airport, Rio Hato airfield, and the Pacora River Bridge. The complexity and precision of the operation were evident in the mix of forward deployed and CONUS based conventional and special operations air, ground, and naval forces, simultaneously striking 27 targets throughout Panama within 53 hours of the President's decision to conduct operations. The result of this coup de main was the restoration of a legitimate government in a matter of days and with few casualties.*

—Chapter 3, FM 100-15

There are unique challenges that may lead to disjointed efforts in planning, coordinating, and the command and control of tactical airpower during joint forcible entry contingency operations. U.S. Army, Air Force and Joint Doctrine have been developed in recent years to reduce the disorganized efforts between services, yet the highly complex nature of forcible entry contingency operations involves many contributory factors: limited planning time, ad hoc staffs, and mixed conventional and special operations airpower are just a few of the factors. Since doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures have been developed to effectively employ airpower in contingency operations, why does our military have such difficulty in fully employing airpower during this type of operation?



The United States military has become increasingly involved in regional conflicts that are short of war. These small-scale contingency operations are difficult to predict and even more difficult to mitigate. As a joint force, the services are required to plan and execute small-scale contingency operations in accordance with Joint Publication 3-18. Given the complexity of forcible entry joint contingency operations, does our joint doctrine fully address the effective employment of tactical airpower in support of forcible entry contingency operations?

This study will examine three recent United States military operations, which were conducted as forcible entry contingency operations. The US military has jointly defined forcible entry operations as “an offensive operation for seizing and holding a military lodgment in the face of armed opposition”.<sup>1</sup> Forcible entry operations are complex and by necessity, joint. Typically, only hours to days separate the alert notification and deployment. This type of operation secures an initial lodgment that includes an airfield or beachhead. The airfield or beachhead becomes a focal point for rapid force projection. When required, initial entry forces expand the lodgment to include a suitable seaport of debarkation for follow-on forces. Once the lodgment is secure, follow-on forces deploy into the lodgment.<sup>2</sup>

The forcible entry of an airhead or beachhead is complicated by the restrictions on the use of tactical airpower. A forcible entry mission requires the limitation of fires to prevent the destruction of the air/beachhead and its associated facilities.<sup>3</sup> Primarily, tactical airpower employed as a part of the counterland airspace function. The types of U.S. Air Force aircraft characterized as performing counterland functions are A-10's,

B-1's, B-2's, B-52's, F15E's, F16's, F117's and AC130's. The research will demonstrate the tactical airpower asset of choice is the special operations AC-130 Spectre gunship due to target acquisition and precision fires. This research defines the increasingly effective employment of tactical airpower assets and the application of lessons learned in preparation for the next small-scale contingency operation.

I chose three case studies that represent both positive and negative aspects of tactical airpower employment in support of forcible entry contingency operations: Operation Urgent Fury, Operation Just Cause, and Operation Restore Hope. Operation Urgent Fury involved the rescue of American medical students from Grenada in late October 1983. As an impromptu operation, Operation Urgent Fury highlighted our inability to plan and command/control tactical airpower in support of joint operations, and our ability to employ airpower in small-scale contingency operations. This combat action would provide significant lessons in the employment of airpower, which would be applied in the next contingency operation.<sup>4</sup>

The second case study, Operation Just Cause, is the operation to capture the indicted Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega, and restore a state of democracy to the country of Panama. This case study demonstrates the knowledge learned from Operation Urgent Fury and our ability to apply the lessons six years later. The operation was similar to Operation Urgent Fury with the added benefit of over 14 months of detailed planning and rehearsals.<sup>5</sup>

The third case study, Operation Restore Hope, represents the tactical employment of airpower in differing roles: deterrence, compellence, and tactical force. The operation was conducted in order to provide security to United Nations relief efforts in Somalia.

The operation transitioned from nation building to one of capturing the warring clan leaders, which culminated on October 3-4 1993.<sup>6</sup>

The case studies demonstrate that the misuse or failure to effectively employ tactical airpower can result in higher casualties, collateral damage and mission failure. Current doctrine, training, and war gaming must be improved to employ tactical airpower to its fullest capabilities.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joint Publication 3-18. Doctrine for Forcible Entry Operations, page I-1.

<sup>2</sup> Department of the Army (June 2001). Field Manual 3-0, Operations, Washington, D.C., page 3-17

<sup>3</sup> Bonham, Gordon C., "Airfield Seizure, the Modern Key to the Country", Fort Leavenworth, KS., 1991. page 2.

<sup>4</sup> Eliason, William T. USAF Support to Low Intensity Conflict: Three Case Studies from the 1980's, Maxwell AFB, AL June 1994., page 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 3.

<sup>6</sup> Hicks, J. Marcus., "Fire in the City: Airpower in Urban Smaller Scale Contingencies", Maxwell AFB, AL., June 1999., page 74

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., page X.

## Chapter 2

### Case Study Summary

*“We were lucky in Grenada; we may not be so fortunate next time.”*

—Senator Sam Nunn <sup>1</sup>

#### Case Study 1: Operation Urgent Fury

The basic objectives of the 1983 U.S. operation in Grenada were to protect U.S. citizens and restore order. Additionally, the U.S. intended to halt the transformation of Grenada into a Marxist stronghold or another Soviet satellite state in the Caribbean. The murder of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop on 19 October 1983 and the ensuing coup initiated U.S. contingency planning. The primary focus was a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO).<sup>2</sup>

Due to Grenada’s geographical location, USLANTCOM had responsibility for the operation. USLANTCOM had an OPLAN developed for this scenario. OPLAN 2360 designated JTF responsibility to Commander, 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps. CINCUSLANTCOM, ADM McDonald was not aware of OPLAN 2360 and initiated planning using only naval forces.<sup>3</sup> Late on 22 October, the NCA and JCS expanded the operation to include restoration of order on Grenada and a no later than execution time of daybreak on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October. This development left the JTF planners less than 48 hours to complete planning, alert and stage forces.<sup>4</sup> Also, the operation now included Army forces. The island of Grenada was split into two separate areas of operation. The

Marines were responsible for objectives in the north and the Army was responsible for objectives in the south.<sup>5</sup>

Due to operational security concerns, the operational planning was compartmentalized. The task force commanders were not permitted to fully integrate their entire staffs, and very little coordination was conducted between the planners and executors. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division commander did not clearly understand his mission and expressed his concerns to the 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps commander. “Ad hocism prevailed.”<sup>6</sup> The Corps staff was virtually left out of the planning and coordinating, but were better prepared to execute the operation than the naval JTF headquarters. USLANTCOM did not appoint an overall ground force commander, so the Marines and Army commander’s reported directly to the JTF commander ensuring a lack of coordination and synchronization.<sup>7</sup>

The invasion began at 0520 hours, 20 minutes behind schedule. The forcible entry operation to seize Point Salines airfield met significant resistance. The 1/75<sup>th</sup> and 2/75<sup>th</sup> began to airdrop after daybreak. Enemy anti-aircraft gunners caused the airdrop formation to break off. Only after AC-130 Spectre gunships suppressed the enemy positions, did the Rangers re-initiate the airborne assault. By 0850 hours the medical students at the True Blue medical campus were rescued. The Rangers expanded the airhead at the airport allowing the landing of follow on forces (82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne) and the reinforcement of the Rangers.<sup>8</sup>

Simultaneously, the Marines began a synchronized helicopter and beach assault to seize tactical objectives in their area of operations. The beach assault did not occur due to poor beach conditions. Additionally, Navy Seals were at the governor’s mansion to

secure the Governor from any threat of the enemy. They met stiff resistance from the Grenadian Peoples Revolutionary Army equipped with BTR 60 APC's.<sup>9</sup> The Seals did not have anti-armor weapons and the JTF commander; ADM Metcalf didn't employ AC-130 gunships to destroy the threat due to collateral damage. Finally, after a change of mission, Marines debarked landing craft with amtracs and tanks to destroy the PRA forces surrounding the Governor's residence.<sup>10</sup>

The role of tactical airpower employment fully rests with the AC-130. Three gunships flew over 20 hour missions on the first day alone. The gunships were responsible for destroying multiple enemy anti-aircraft positions and armored vehicles. Their accuracy and lethality overpowered the PRA.<sup>11</sup> Evidence shows that the Marines rarely used the AC-130, relying heavily on Sea Cobras and Navy A-7 Corsairs.

After four days of fighting, the NCA objectives were met, U.S. citizens were secured and evacuated and order restored to the island nation. Yet, there were many lessons learned. The initial assault to seize Army and Marine objectives was not preceeded by tactical airpower. Even though AC-130's were overhead to conduct reconnaissance on the objectives, there were no any planned pre-assault fires missions by AC-130 and A-7 attack aircraft, which violates the standards by which recent forcible entry operations were planned. The lack of planning and coordinating at the tactical level were a direct result of the haphazard plans and coordination at the operational level. Unity of command was a problem due to inter-service reluctance to work with each other. An example is the Navy forbidding Army helicopters from landing on their carriers and refueling them. Joint operations were not common place in 1983, thus Congressional

inquiry into Operation Urgent Fury led to the Nichols-Goldwater Act of 1986 paving the way for successful joint operations three years later in Panama, Operation Just Cause.

### **Case Study 2: Operation Just Cause**

In February 1988, General Manuel Noriega seized control of the Panamanian government. He trafficked drugs, harassed American citizens, and attempted to interdict U.S. rights of passage in the Canal Zone. Noriega's criminal activities continued for almost two years. During this time, CINCSOUTHCOM, GEN Thurman rewrote the OPLAN as a "Coup de Main". U.S. forces would strike simultaneously at 27 tactical objectives across the country.<sup>12</sup> President Bush authorized the execution of the OPLAN after the 17 December death of a Marine officer and detention and torture of a Navy officer and his wife.<sup>13</sup>

The planning for Operation Just Cause began in February 1988 after Noriega assumed control of Panama. The pre-invasion planning was considered contingency planning. GEN Thurman designated LTG Stiner, 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps Commander as the JTF South Commander. LTG Stiner's joint staff planned, rehearsed, and revised the OPLAN over the course of the next 18 months. Their major objectives were the neutralization of the Panamanian Defense Forces, to protect U.S. citizens and treaty rights, to remove Noriega from power, and to establish a democratic government in Panama.<sup>14</sup> The planners developed three basic courses of action. "They were (1) the use of overwhelming force to subdue the PDF, (2) surgical raids to seize Noriega, and (3) limited attacks against the PDF headquarters to destroy its ability to C2."<sup>15</sup> Each plan had its own strengths and weaknesses, and differed in time on the ground. Overall, the plans were sound and efficient.<sup>16</sup> The JTF was able to pre-position forces and conduct

multiple joint rehearsals during the months prior to the operation. As a result, the joint military planning and coordination were exemplary. Operation Urgent Fury was not going to be executed again at the operational and strategic levels of war.

The seizure of two airfields was critical to the success of the operation. One key airfield, Torrijos/Tocumen (T/T) International Airport, would serve as a secure staging base for follow-on forces. The 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion (+) was assigned responsibility for the mission. T/T was not only a tactical objective, but it held strategic and operational value as well. T/T was Panama's only international airport, which was critical to the country's economy, thus minimal collateral damage was required. Also, the airport was located in a position to prevent the reinforcement of Panama City by the elite Panamanian Defense Force, Battalion 2000. The strategic value of this airfield required a forcible entry operation to secure and allow the necessary follow-on forces to arrive in the theater from CONUS bases.

At 0045 hours on 20 December 1989, AC-130 gunships and F-117 stealth aircraft (2000lb bombs) conducted pre-assault fires in order to destroy anti-aircraft positions and neutralize enemy forces at Rio Hato and T/T airfields. This alerted the PDF of an impending U.S. assault. At 0100, the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment conducted airborne assaults to seize the two airfields, prepare for the reception of follow-on forces, and conduct combat missions as required. Within eleven hours, follow-on forces from the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division began air land operations at T/T to reinforce clearing operations in Panama City.<sup>17</sup> The seizure of T/T was essential to the operation. In order to meet the objectives of the "Coup de Main", additional ports of entry were required, thus the necessity for a large airport.



The role of airpower in the operation was a strategic enabler, and essential during every combat operation. The nine AC-130 Spectre gunships, allocated throughout the JTF, provided pre-assault fires, suppressing fires, and close air support during the operation. The AC-130 was chosen due to its accuracy and lethality.<sup>18</sup> Collateral damage was minimized with the maximum amount of firepower delivered to targets. Synchronizing fires with maneuver forces was very difficult, yet the AC-130's provided responsive and accurate fires in support of ground operations. The AC-130's unique capabilities (sensors, fire control, and munitions) in urban environments allow the platform to identify and attack threats within minutes and seconds of friendly force insertion.<sup>19</sup>

There were limitations, though. There was a friendly fire incident in which a gunship misidentified a friendly vehicle due to high ambient light levels, even though it was marked accordingly.<sup>20</sup> The low yield munitions helped reduce collateral damage, but did not achieve the desired effects on armor vehicles and concrete re-enforced targets. "The F-117 missions demonstrated the limitations of precision guided munitions and the deliverable weapon systems"<sup>21</sup> The threat of collateral damage reduces the PGM employment capabilities and reduced their use in the restrictive urban operations environment.

The U.S. has identified these and other shortfalls. New marking devices have been developed and incorporated into training. More accurate and lethal precision-guided munitions have been developed and implemented in the Gulf, the Balkans, and Afghanistan. Training and communicating with air assets is very difficult. We must continue to train in this joint environment, in order to perfect our skills in joint

operations.

### **Case Study Three: Operation Restore Hope:**

In December 1992, the United Nations adopted Security Council Resolution 794, which included a mandate for military intervention in Somalia as part of a humanitarian relief effort.<sup>22</sup> USCENTCOM designated I MEF as the JTF-Somalia. The JTF mission statement identified four objectives in Somalia: (1) Secure major air and sea ports, key installations, and food distribution points, (2) Provide open and free passage of relief supplies, (3) Provide security for convoys and relief organization preparation, and (4) Assist the UN/NGO's in providing humanitarian relief operations under UN auspices.<sup>23</sup> The JTF began contingency planning in order to execute the assigned mission.

From the receipt of initial orders, until the deployment of forces, the JTF had just over seven days to plan, rehearse, and coordinate joint and combined staff and command components. The JTF planners possessed relatively little knowledge of the theater of operations, the competing belligerents, or the type of operation that the NCA anticipated to be executed.<sup>24</sup> Upon notification of the time sensitive, contingency operation, the JTF planners followed a logical progression of prioritizing the competing requirements in a critical task list. This critical task list was executed in a sequential manner.<sup>25</sup>

Phase I of the OPLAN outlined four objectives of which three were the security of airfields and seaports. The fourth was the security of the U.S. Embassy. Marine forces were to secure the Mogadishu air and seaport, the Baledogle Airfield for follow-on Army forces, and the Baidoa airfield.<sup>26</sup> Once this phase is completed the JTF will expand operations to include security of additional relief distribution centers, expansion into the interior of the country, and finally transfer of control from the U.S. to UN forces. From 9

December to 15 December 1992 Phase I objectives were accomplished. Phase I ended 15 days ahead of schedule.<sup>27</sup>

The air component command established in Somalia was the Airspace Control Agency (ACA), which consisted primarily of Marine personnel from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Air Wing.<sup>28</sup> The ACA was responsible for airspace management, coordinating flight schedules, and operation of the Joint Rescue Coordination Center.<sup>29</sup> The ACA coordinated air assets from each of the four services and multi-national air forces in support of the Operation Restore Hope.

Forcible entry amphibious operations were conducted to seize two ports, Mogadishu and Kismayo. Marines with the air support of AV-8B's from the carrier battle group seized the two seaports. Additionally, Marine and Army air assaults were conducted to seize the Baledogle and Baidoa airfields. Both carrier based Marine AV-8B's and Navy F-14's provided close air support to the operations. The Navy was responsible for providing continuous combat air patrol during the operation.<sup>30</sup>

The air coordination in support of these forcible entry operations was limited. The JTF established the ACA to ensure each operation was coordinated and synchronized from an air perspective, however, the ACA lacked the authority to task or control most of the air assets in theater. The ACA had to work through the J3 Air and the COMNAVFOR to coordinate carrier based aircraft. Also, in the early stages of the operation, the ACA's coordination requirements were limited due to the preponderance of forces being Marines from the MEU. Given the inter-service relationship of the Marines and supporting Navy assets, this wasn't truly a joint operation, thus the ACA was not included.

During this contingency operation, carrier based attack aircraft were used in the tactical airpower role. They flew numerous missions over Somalia, but did not attack any targets. As a result of not conducting any attacks, due to the lack of credible targets, the Somali's were not threatened by the aircraft. Yet once AC130's arrived in the theater of operations, they immediately demonstrated their capabilities. The Somali's were frightened by the lethality of the weapon system, which served as a deterrent to the fighting clans.<sup>31</sup> Thus the employment of tactical airpower was more of a show of force than actual support missions.

Operationally, Operation Restore Hope was difficult to anticipate, plan, and prepare for. The complexity of the uncertain operational environment presented the military forces with an undefined enemy. Even though the U.S. had limited operational objectives, this operation included the overwhelming use of combat power, to include airpower, to establish conditions that would lead to regional stability.<sup>32</sup>

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Senkovich, Steven W., "From Port Salines to Panama City; The Evolution of Command and Control in Contingency Operations", FT Leavenworth, KS, May 1990. page 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., page 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., page 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., page 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., page 18.

## Notes

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, page 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, page 20.

<sup>11</sup> Rivard, David T., An Analysis of Operation Urgent Fury. Maxwell AFB, AL. April 1985. page 8.

<sup>12</sup> Bonham, page 28.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, page 29.

<sup>14</sup> Eliason, page 54.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, James T. Just Cause: Some Lessons Learned. Carlisle Barracks, PA. April 1992, page 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, page 22.

<sup>17</sup> Bonham, page 32.

<sup>18</sup> Hicks, page 58.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, page 62.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 64.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page 65.

<sup>22</sup> McGrady, Katherine., “The Joint Task Force in Operation Restore Hope”, Alexandria, VA., March 1994, page 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, page 12.

<sup>24</sup> Baggott, Christopher L., “A Leap into the Dark: Crisis Action Planning for Operation Restore Hope”, FT Leavenworth, KS. 1996, page 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, page 17.

<sup>26</sup> McGrady, page 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, page 21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, page 55.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, page 56.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, page 84.

<sup>31</sup> Hicks, page 83.

<sup>32</sup> Baggott, page 31.

## Chapter 3

### Doctrine: Joint and Service Agreement

*“Doctrine provides a military organization with a common philosophy, a common language, a common purpose, and a unity of effort.”*

General George H. Decker, USA

The national military strategy relies on a CONUS based force projection and employment of an immediately available overseas presence. In order to remain credible as a deterrent and as a viable military option for policy enforcement, US military forces must be capable of deploying and fighting to gain access to geographical areas controlled by hostile forces.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the capability to execute forcible entry operations is paramount. Forcible entry operations are complex, risky and always joint. Typically only hours or days separate alert and deployment. The operations are carefully planned and rehearsed at training areas and initial staging bases. Equipment is prepared for immediate use. To the greatest extent possible, air based fire support assets are utilized.

#### Joint Doctrine

Joint doctrine is the guide which U.S. military employs forces. Additionally, service doctrine provides the JFC an effective guide to employ the unique capabilities each service component brings to the fight.<sup>2</sup> Joint Publication 3-18 defines forcible entry as “seizing and holding a military lodgment in the face of armed opposition”<sup>3</sup> The U.S.

military trains and rehearses three primary forcible entry capabilities: amphibious assault, airborne assault, and air assault. The JFC may select one capability or a combination of capabilities to complete the assigned mission.

The JFC will plan and conduct concurrent or integrated operations. Concurrent operations are a combination of amphibious, airborne, and/or air assault options, which are conducted simultaneously, but as distinct operations with separate operational areas and objectives.<sup>4</sup> Operation Urgent Fury is an example of this type of operation. U.S. Army forces conducted an airfield seizure of Point Salinas airfield on the south side of the island, while US Marine forces conducted air assault and amphibious operations in the vicinity of Pearls Airport to the north. The JFC split the island in half, creating two separate operational areas with corresponding objectives. Integrated forcible entry operations are “conducted simultaneously within the same operational area and with objectives that are mutually supporting.”<sup>5</sup> An example is an airborne operation to seize an airfield within the same area of operations as an amphibious landing operation. Each operation supports the other in ensuring the enemy is disrupted.

The command and control of the airpower is established by the JFACC’s designation of an airspace control area, which is normally defined by the “boundaries that delineate the operational area.”<sup>6</sup> During airborne/air assault operations, the responsibilities of the JFACC, area air defense commander, and the airspace control authority are interrelated and are normally assigned to one individual. The close coordination between these three responsibilities is critical. The JFACC may elect to employ airborne C2 assets to enhance the coordination and control of joint air operations and airspace management.<sup>7</sup>

In order to conduct successful forcible entry operations, the JFC must set the operational conditions. The JFC strives to achieve the following: “surprise, control of the air, control of the space environment, control of the sea, isolate the lodgment, neutralization of enemy forces within the lodgment, management of environmental factors, and the integration of psychological operations and civil military operations.”<sup>8</sup> The conditions are set during the first phase (planning and deployment) of the contingency operation. Air interdiction is one method used to prepare assault objectives for the commitment of assault forces. During phase 2 (assault) of the operation, the joint force uses surprise to overwhelm the enemy and protect assault forces. Pre-assault fires by tactical airpower assets are employed to destroy enemy forces, enemy reserves, aircraft, theater missiles, and naval forces that could disrupt the operation.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, once assault forces have landed, they must be able to immediately employ joint airpower to destroy, interdict, or suppress enemy forces. This allows the JFC to maintain the initiative in seizing the initial assault objectives and prepare forces for follow-on operations.

The considerations the JFC must account for are as follows: mission, threat, geography, forces available, time available, forcible entry options, connectivity, command relationships, etc. Once the JFC accounts for these considerations, he must synchronize the operation. Synchronization is the orchestration of all available forces in a way to capitalize on the joint forces synergistic effect. This will seize the initiative from the enemy and defeat them.<sup>10</sup> Synchronization is particularly critical during airborne and air assault operations. Speed and surprise is paramount to the success of these operations. In order to achieve speed and surprise the synchronization of pre-



assault fires and the introduction of ground forces is critical. The enemy must not be allowed to react decisively or operationally reposition forces. The employment of tactical airpower at critical times will prevent the enemy from executing cohesive and decisive maneuvers. We will have maintained the initiative.

#### United States Army Doctrine

The Army lists Forcible Entry Operations as one of its core competencies, which are the essential and enduring capabilities of our service. FM 1 describes forcible entry operations as the following: “Multidimensional Army forces provide a forcible entry capability to access contested areas worldwide. They can be ready to fight immediately and prepare for the arrival of follow-on forces. This capability is essential to reduce predictability, dominate a situation, deny an adversary his objectives, contain a conflict, conduct decisive operations, deter protracted conflict, and terminate conflict on our terms.”<sup>11</sup> Examples of forcible entry operations are coup de main (Operations Urgent Fury and Just Cause), lodgment operations (Operation Restore Hope initial entry mission), and raids (Operation Restore Hope – Battle of Bakara Market, 3-4 October 1993). Forcible entry operations require the full synchronization of joint capabilities.<sup>12</sup> U.S Army Field Manuals 3-0 and 100-15 are the primary references for Forcible Entry Contingency Operations. FM 3-0 provides the link between Joint and Service doctrine. FM 100-15 (Corps Operations) is the primary reference for planning and executing this type of operation. Corps Commanders, who will most like serve as a JTF commander, are the primary executors of forcible entry operations.

The different types of forcible entry operations that the U.S. Army conducts are airborne, air assault, and amphibious landing operations. The objective or mission of the

operation controls the planning and execution of these operations. Several criteria are used in the planning of operations; sufficient air/seaport facilities, the port's capability to quickly unload and depart aircraft and ships, and an airfield's capabilities to park tactical aircraft. Additional limiting factors are the amount of tactical air support available during the assault phase and attainment of air supremacy, enemy missiles and rocket systems, enemy coastal and airfield defenses, and beach conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Tactical airpower targets are known enemy anti-aircraft positions, command and control sites, and/or coastal defensive positions to facilitate the entry force into the objective area. This will decrease the enemy's efficiency to command and control, reduce his effectiveness to engage friendly forces, and disrupt his synchronization.

Tactical airpower also provides the majority of Army fire support during the entry phase of the operation until the Army Service Component Commander (ASCC) can deploy his organic fire support systems.

#### United States Air Force Doctrine

Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1, Air Warfare, establishes operational doctrine for air warfare. The three Air Force functions that apply to tactical employment of airpower in forcible entry contingency operations are Counterair (offensive and defensive), Counterland (air interdiction and close air support), and Strategic Attack. During the execution of forcible entry operations into an airfield or beachhead, offensive counterair missions focus on surface attack and suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD). The priority targets are hardened aircraft shelters, POL sites, munition storage facilities, C2 sites, and enemy surface based air defenses.<sup>14</sup> Both Operation Urgent Fury and Operation Just Cause demonstrated the use of offensive counterair. Primarily the AC-

130's in both operations conducted OCA, which is not the asset of choice in conventional operations.

Counterland operations are air interdiction (AI) and close air support (CAS). Air interdiction targets are typically lines of communication, supply centers, C2 nodes, and fielded enemy forces. By attacking these types of enemy targets, the JFC is able to leverage the available air assets against relatively few targets that create significant disruptions.<sup>15</sup> CAS is the use of airpower in direct support of the ground maneuver force. CAS requires detailed coordination between the air asset and the ground force due to the close proximity of the ground force with enemy forces. Even though CAS is not the most efficient employment of airpower, it is the most effective during critical combat operations, such as forcible entry operations. CAS increases the ground force commander's combat power considerably when used during the initial assault of the airfield or beachhead, given the low number of organized friendly forces that may be able to engage the enemy at that critical juncture of the operation. This was not demonstrated during the initial entry into Port Salines airfield in Grenada, where there were no pre-assault fires. The lead aircraft dropped the Battalion C2 element, but the following aircraft broke off due to heavy anti-aircraft fire. With relatively few combat forces on the ground, the ground force commander directed an overhead AC-130 to destroy the anti-aircraft emplacements. The combat power of the AC-130 enabled a platoon-sized element to sustain direct combat for approximately 40 minutes, which is when the remainder of the aircraft completed the airdrop portion of the operation. This led subsequent operations to conduct pre-assault fires prior to the airdrop, in order to set the conditions of the battlefield prior to the introduction of ground forces.

Strategic attack is the application of airpower against an enemy's centers of gravity and other vital targets, such as C2 elements, war production assets, and key supporting infrastructure. An example of strategic attack occurred during Operation Just Cause, when a flight of two F-117 stealth aircraft dropped precision-guided munitions on the barracks complex at Rio Hato airfield prior to the airdrop of Rangers. The type of airpower asset used or the specific target attacked does not determine strategic attack, but the expected effects on the enemy's capacity or will to wage war.<sup>16</sup>

In the planning and conduct of forcible entry operations, the JFC must determine how and when to apply his allocated airpower assets. Given the typical compressed planning time prior to execution, the targeted aspects of the enemy must support the introduction of ground forces. Enemy command and control must be disrupted, enemy air defenses suppressed or destroyed, and enemy troop concentrations neutralized. The combination of counterair, counterland, and strategic attack contributes to the successful force introduction into a hostile area of operations.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Analysis**

An analysis of the case studies determines that airpower was critically important to mission success when rapid precise power projection is required. Additionally, airpower is valuable to the JFC's ability to reduce friendly casualties, limit collateral damage, and support ground maneuver operations with precision guided munitions and technically superior weaponry. The reduction of friendly and civilian casualties, as well as collateral damage in politically sensitive environments is mission critical.<sup>17</sup> This also suggests that due to the influence of airpower on the success of the operations, joint airpower is an integral part of the combined arms team.

Given the continued likelihood of forcible entry contingency operations in the future, the joint force needs to position itself for future employment in small-scale contingency operations. There are areas of improvement to be made in order to execute this type of contingency operation. Operations Urgent Fury, Just Cause and Restore Hope have provide an excellent foundation for which forcible entry operations have evolved. Joint doctrine has been developed that specifically addresses forcible entry operations, and the services have developed doctrine to fully support the joint doctrine. Also, unity of command is required in order to successfully employ airpower in support of the JFC's mission.

During Operation Urgent Fury, the services were not educated or trained in the execution of forcible entry operations. Each service had its own view on how to conduct operations. The doctrine did not necessarily match the requirements of these small-scale contingency operations. Today, Joint Publication 3-18 addresses this type of operation. To be effective at conducting these operations, the Army and Air Force must sufficiently plan, train, and develop the force structure capable of executing these operations as established by joint doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The development of joint doctrine provides the basis for how the services should conduct forcible entry operations. Unfortunately, the services are not exposed to joint doctrine until the staff colleges. The services must find a way to integrate joint doctrine into plans and training. Otherwise, the services are unprepared to plan and execute this type of operation.

The requirement for detailed and coordinated planning is critical for the use of airpower. Without it, the air plan could not be developed. Today's joint doctrine designates a JFACC with staff to execute air operations. If the planning staff for Operation Urgent Fury had been formalized as opposed to compartmentalized within each supporting service and agency, a more coherent and effective plan would have been executed. Operations Just Cause and Restore Hope capitalized on the joint planning aspect, which had been emphasized in training. Thus, these two operations were very successful.

Centralized command and control is required for the effective employment of airpower. The lesson learned is that one airman is the commander of joint air operations. If there are two separate air commanders, JFACC and JSOACC, each must be

coordinated and synchronized with each other's plans. In contingency operations, a lack of command and control of airpower can lead to disastrous results. The airspace becomes congested, the appropriate airpower assets are not allocated as required, and unsafe actions occur. In this type of environment, planning at the outset must integrate all operational organizations. This will identify problems and deconflict those problems in the planning phase. The integration of the special operations liaison element in the JFACC staff will provide for integrated and synchronized operations.

Tactical airpower was mission essential for each of the analyzed operations. In each operation, a forcible entry option was the only one considered that allowed the U.S. to use overwhelming force quickly enough to seize all major objectives. These operations demonstrate that when urban operations require surprise and speed of power projection, airpower is essential. Contingency operations are our future and the requirement to rapidly place bullets/bombs on target, particularly in urban environments, where airfields and seaports are located is essential to mission success.

Pre-assault fires are significant to the threat/risk reduction to aircraft, amphibious landing ships, and ground forces. In Operation Urgent Fury, the lack of pre-assault fires caused the mission delay of numerous lift aircraft. Thus the forcible entry airborne assault, which should have been an 8-10 minute phase of the operation, turned into a 90-minute operation due to the follow-on aircraft egressing the target airfield prior to the airborne operation. During this delay, the AC-130's, which were on station for reconnaissance and surveillance, destroyed the anti-aircraft positions in order to continue the airborne assault. This could have been avoided if the planning would have been conducted jointly instead of compartmentalized. A joint targeting team would have

determined the criticality of destroying the emplacements around the airfield, and recommended to the JTF commander that AC-130's fill this role.

In Operation Just Cause, pre-assault fires significantly reduced the risk to aircraft and ground forces. Not only were enemy anti-aircraft positions destroyed, but also enemy troop concentrations were either destroyed or neutralized. This was a result of the demonstrated capabilities of the AC-130, which served as a deterrent once the fighting began. The one area that was not as successful was the use of the F-117 Stealth aircraft. The F-117 used 2000lb munitions to "stun" the troops in the barracks complex stationed at Rio Hato airfield. This was an operational failure. In an effort to minimize casualties, the enemy was alerted to the operation and the ground forces met very stiff resistance from the Panamanian Defense Forces. The F-117 must be able to use smaller precision-guided munitions in order to achieve greater effects on enemy troops and positions, which has steadily evolved during the course of the past 7-10 years. This example and the illogical perception that troops are required to have "eyes on" in order to ensure the destruction of a target are misunderstandings of the operational art of war fighting. The employment of airpower in situations where troop involvement can be reduced or eliminated is a requirement for our future battles.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions**

The future holds more opportunities for forcible entry contingency operations. Our capabilities will increase, as well as our enemies. Future operations are not likely to be as survivable as the case studies examined. The proliferation of infrared-guided surface-to-air missiles will make future battle space significantly more dangerous. Therefore, future contingency operations must exploit weapon systems and tactics that provide greater survivability. As a result the increased use of armed remotely piloted vehicles and high-performance fixed wing aircraft may be required.<sup>18</sup> Our current and future advances in precision-guided munitions offer tremendous benefits to the JTF commander. The JFACC can tailor munitions and delivery systems to achieve the desired effects. Thus, friendly, civilian, and enemy casualties and collateral damage may be reduced.

Tactical airpower is a critical element across the spectrum of military art. Airpower can be used to achieve political as well as military goals. The proper application of airpower has wide ranging effects (reduction of casualties and collateral damage). But also the misuse of airpower or the failure to fully exploit its capabilities can lead to degraded tactical mission effectiveness. The growing emphasis on joint operations, combined with the use of military force to resolve political situations, requires the

continued refinement of joint planning and execution to support forcible entry contingency operations.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> JP 3-18, page I-1.

## Notes

<sup>2</sup> Senna, Philip, "The JFACC and Small Scale Contingency Operations". Maxwell AFB, AL. April 1998, page 9.

<sup>3</sup> JP 3-18, page I-1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page II-1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, page II-4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, page II-8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, page III-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, page III-3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid page V-1.

<sup>11</sup> Department of the Army (June 2001). *Field Manual 1-0, The Army*, Washington, D.C., page 22.

<sup>12</sup> Department of the Army (29 Oct 1996). *Field Manual 100-15. Corps Operations*, Washington, D.C. Chapter 3, page 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Chapter 3, page 6.

<sup>14</sup> AFDD 2-1, page 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, page 14.

<sup>17</sup> Hicks, page 102.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, page 109.